

Your FREE guide to Real Ale and Pubs in South Oxfordshire

SoxonAle



Issue 8
Spring 2009

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....has closed

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THE
RED LION
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SOX

Produced by the Campaign for Real Ale



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SoxonAle

THE NEWSLETTER OF SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE BRANCH OF CAMRA

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I went recently to a presentation at the SODC offices about rural issues. One of the things that struck me most was that, whilst only around 40% of villages in the District have a shop, post office or school, about 80% of them have a pub. So, whilst we bemoan (quite rightly) the loss of pubs, we should also remember that the pub is the most commonly-found community facility in our villages, with the possible exception of a village hall or pavilion.

However, we should not be complacent about this, as pubs are disappearing fast and the Government's misguided increases in beer taxes are pushing yet more pubs to the wall. CAMRA is campaigning hard on these issues. If you support those aims, please join. A membership form appears on page 20. Or you can join online.

David Cooper
Editor

Advertising

We welcome advertising from all local traders. Please contact the editor for details and rates.

Letters and News

The editor welcomes letters and news items for publication. Please supply name and contact details.

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ABOUT SoxonAle

SoxonAle is published by the South Oxfordshire Branch of CAMRA.
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ABOUT CAMRA

CAMRA - the Campaign for Real Ale - exists to promote cask and other traditional beers, along with preserving our pub heritage.

You can find out more about the Campaign at our website www.CAMRA.org.uk, where you can also join online or use the form on page 20.



News

Pubs

CAMRA South Oxfordshire has awarded its *Pub of the Year* trophy to the **Red Lion** in **Brightwell-cum-Sotwell**. The Red Lion was featured



in our last issue as *Pub of the Season* for Autumn. Our picture shows Sue Robson receiving the certificate from Branch Chairman, Richard Starkey. The pub received the award for its four excellent draught beers, its friendliness and its involvement in the local community.

Runner-up was the **Bear at Home**, in nearby **North Moreton**, Branch and Oxfordshire *Pub of the Year* in 2007. The Bear will be open all day on Sundays until September.

Spring 2009 *Pub of the Season* is the **Fleur-de-Lys** in **Dorchester**. Landlady Jess is pictured receiving the award.

More details on both the winners in the next issue.



Good news (again) in **Wallingford**. The **Old Post Office** now serves Loddon and Brakspear draught beer.

The **Lamb** at **Satwell** fell victim to the collapse of the Antony Worrall Thompson Restaurant Group, but has now been reopened by CAMRA member, *Chris Smith* from Rotherfield Peppard. In a deal with **Loddon Brewery**, the pub is having its own beer brewed under the name *Leaping Lamb*. *Chris Smith* and Loddon boss, *Chris Hearn*, are at pains to point out that Leaping Lamb is not one of Loddon's regular brews, but is a unique beer. *Chris* has big plans for the pub.



For more details see
www.thelambpub.net

The **King Charles Head**, at **Goring Heath**, failed to get planning permission for change of use to residential use and structural changes because of bats in the roof. A revised application has been submitted by new developers.

The **Shepherds Hut** in **Ewelme** closed at the end of February after financial problems overtook its licensees. After sorting out complicated lease arrangements, *Greene King* is hopeful that a new licensee will be installed by mid-June. Former managers, Sandra and Tat Atwood are now at the **Swan** in **Bicester**.

The nearby *Brakspear*-owned **Crown** in **Nuffield** appears to be closed and is offered on *Brakspear's* website.

Also on *Brakspear's* website are the **Fox and Hounds**, **Watlington**, and the **Row Barge**, **Henley**.

Greene King, meanwhile, is offering the **Morning Star**, **Cholsey** and the **Carpenters Arms** in **Appleford**.

Enterprise Inns has only the **Bird in Hand**, **Sonning Common**, while *Admiral Taverns* is offering the **Cricketers** in **Warborough**.

Also in the same area, the **Three Horseshoes** in **Benson** has been taken over by *Glenn Walker*, recently of the **Six Bells** in **Warborough** and formerly of the **Chequers** in **Berrick Salome**.

The **Bottle and Glass** in **Binfield Heath** is now thriving under new

licensee, *Gemma Mackinze*, who has been running a bar in Spain and returned to the UK to take on the pub. Again a friendly and enthusiastic welcome!

The nearby **Flowing Spring** in **Sonning Eye** appears to be thriving again under the new licensee, *Sandra Singer* from Scotland, who has made the pub even more popular than before. She's friendly and enthusiastic when we've been in. The food is cheap and cheerful and beer quality is good.

Is this part of a trend for some of our better pubs to be run by female licensees?

Across the area, the **Crispin** in **Harwell** is boarded up, but the **White Hart** is operating again. Both pubs belong to *Greene King*.

Breweries

This issue was to have an article on **Butlers Brewery** of Mapledurham. Sadly, before we went to press, the brewery closed and *SoxonAle* understands that the equipment has been sold off.

Butlers was started in 2003 by Sarah and Mark Butler and its beers quickly established themselves as local favourites, particularly Butler's Oxfordshire Bitter (BOB).

Unfortunately, the brewery and its beers are no more. On behalf of southern Oxfordshire drinkers, *SoxonAle* thanks Sarah and Mark for lighting up the local brewing landscape and wishes them well for the future.

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CAMRA

CAMRA has condemned the beer tax rise in the Budget, equivalent to 5p on a pint, as another blow to well-run community pubs.

A new report from the Institute for Public Policy Research, with the support of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale., has been presented to MPs.

The report includes a pioneering new method of calculating the social and economic benefit generated by well-run community pubs and finds that pubs are:

- the most popular place where people can mix socially with others from different backgrounds
- a great supporter of charity, with over £3,000 on average raised per pub every year

- outside of the home the most popular place for people to meet their neighbours
- a place for people to make new friends - more than one in five pub goers has made a new friend in a pub in the past six months. 

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THE RED LION INN

115 High Street, Chalgrove
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Tel: 01865 890625

4 Real Ales are served at any one time are rotated to provide a good choice; typically Fullers *London Pride*, Adnams *Bitter*, Timothy Taylor *Landlord*, Loddon *Hoppit* or Appleford *Power Station*.

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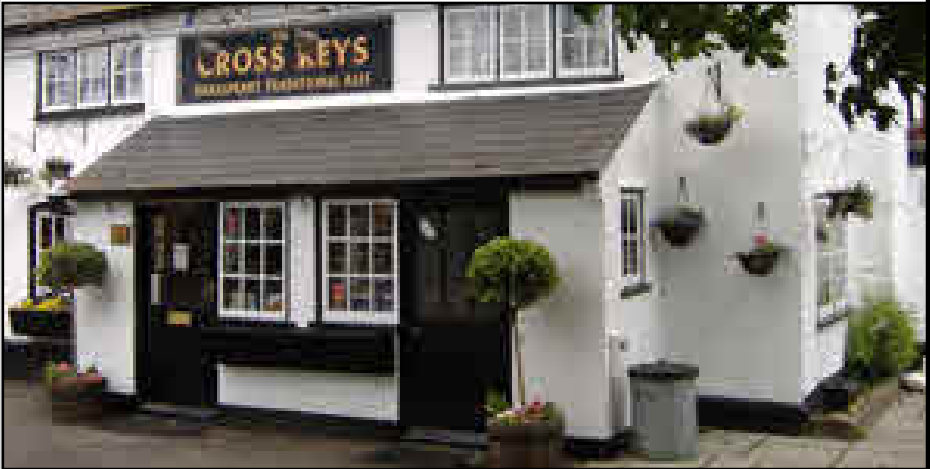
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South Oxfordshire CAMRA Pub of the Season Spring 2008



Real Ale Cycle Trails

This regular feature describes tried and tested routes around south Oxfordshire that combine (largely) stress-free cycling and real ale..

Trail #4: Didcot – Goring - Wallingford - Didcot

Ride: rolling with some short steep climbs through open country with light traffic. Distance: 36 km / 22 miles

Start on the B4016 out of Didcot through East Hagbourne. After 4 km, turn left to Aston Tirrold.

1. Weave your way through Aston Tirrold, passing the **Chequers**, aka the **Sweet Olive**, and after 2.5 km you turn left onto the A417.

2. During the morning and evening commute the A417 can be slightly alarming. At other times it's generally OK and is a very pleasant roller-coaster ride of 7 km to Streatley. Turn right at the junction with the A329 then left at the lights. Look out for the **Bull**, mentioned in *Three Men in a Boat*.

3. There's a short downhill run to the bridge over the Thames – once across you're in Goring. The river and the lock are very pretty and worth stopping to admire. There's a short climb through the town, passing the **Miller of Mansfield**, to the junction with the B4009. Turn left.

4. After about 250 m the road drops sharply. Turn right at the bottom of the dip and then left after about 300 m. Keep going for 4 km through open traffic-free countryside. Note Chiltern Park Aerodrome on the right.

5. Cross the A4074, taking the narrow road to a junction with an even narrower one and turn left towards Ipsden. These roads are permanently covered with loose gravel so take care, especially on the sharp drop just before Ipsden. There's a short but steep climb through the village. Go straight over the small crossroads and you'll see a turn to the right signposted Hailey, home to the **King William**, a very attractive pub with a view from the garden as good as you'll see anywhere and well worth the very short detour.

6. Otherwise, keep going across the downs for 4 km until you meet the A4074 again. There is a traffic island to cross the main road and a short cycle path opposite to avoid the roundabout.

7. Turn left through Crowmarsh Gifford, passing the **Bell** and the **Queens Head**, then in Wallingford the **Boat House** and the **Cross Keys**.

8. Keep going and turn left after the roundabout on the outskirts of the town into Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. You'll need some refreshment by now and the **Red Lion** is the place to take it. This is a Good Beer Guide Pub and the Branch's Pub of the Year 2009.

9. But don't overdo it because just through the village, after rejoining the A4130 then turning off at the sharp bend leads to North Moreton. You'll certainly want to visit the **Bear at**

Continued on Page 10



Bird in Hand

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Winter Pub of the Season

The Red Lion, Chalgrove

It's an uncanny coincidence. Both our Autumn and Winter Pubs of the Season are centuries-old, called the *Red Lion*, in the centre of a village, serve four consistently good real ales, with a fine food selection. Both are run by licensees in charge of their first pub and who have been there for less than eighteen months. And both run regular charity and community events, which contribute a lot to village life in many ways.

Last season's pub was the *Red Lion* in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and this one's is the *Red Lion* in Chalgrove. Chalgrove is



quite a bit bigger than Brightwell and has two other thriving pubs, both owned by Greene King, but far from identikit pubs. The *Lamb* has a large

modern extension, dominating a thatched original building. It offers keenly-priced, tasty food and good beers, with regular guests. The *Crown* is more of a fifties pub, in the best sense of the word, with an increasingly rare two-bar layout and also serves very palatable, but also increasingly rare, *Morland Original Bitter*.

So the *Red Lion* is up against some serious competition. And Suzanne and Raymond Sexton have risen to it magnificently. In common with the other *Red Lion*, it was a good pub, with a good food offering before they took over. Now it's a really good pub. And in both cases, it's down to hard work, more than a little flair and reaching out to the local community.

Both Suzanne and Raymond are trained chefs and worked for many years for Jamie Oliver's father, when they decided they wanted their own business. Suzanne says she was looking for a tea shop, but when Raymond fell in love at first sight with the *Red Lion*, she allowed herself to be persuaded and shows no sign of regretting it. Keeping and serving beer was new to both of them, but they are obviously quick learners. *Timothy Taylor Landlord*, *Adnams Bitter* and *Fullers London Pride* are always available, but the fourth pump is reserved for a rotating guest ale, often requested by customers.



These are often, but not always, from local breweries, like *Appleford* (see *SoxonAle* 7).

Having survived their first year, they are itching to develop the business. Monthly pudding nights have just started; at least two wedding receptions and a christening party will be held in a marquee at the rear, and catering and bars for outside events is beginning to take off.


The *Red Lion* has a darts team and the *Sextons* are open to hosting other sports teams. A number of village organisations use the pub as a meeting place for committee meetings and they host a number of charity events, such as a coffee morning for Children in Need, and for their chosen charity, the First Responder service, and support other village events elsewhere.



The pub is nearly unique in being owned by the Church. Chalgrove's vicar actually reopened it in 1992 after several years of its being closed. Recently painted in Cornish Cream, behind a small brook and a lawn, this archetypal English pub often appears in magazine articles and on calendars.

The outside is well in keeping with the cosy interior, which has more exposed beams, nooks and crannies than you can shake a stick at. With an open log fire, friendly locals, a pleasant mix of



ages and backgrounds and drinkers intermingling with diners, the *Red Lion* is perfect for a winter's evening, whether you want to eat, drink or both. And the rest of the year, the two gardens provide a pleasant outdoor area to do the same. But whilst you are in Chalgrove, give the other two pubs a try as well. 

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AND REAL ALE
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Bruges Beer Festival

The 2nd Bruges Beer Festival took place on 15th and 16th November 2008. With almost 200 Belgian beers available on draught and in bottles, from 55 different breweries, it was the ideal opportunity to discover some new Belgian beers. The beer was served in 15 cl glasses, purchased as part of the entry price, and so it was easy to drink a variety of beers in a day, despite the alcoholic strength varying from 5% to 12%. Beer was paid for by purchasing tokens on the door. CAMRA members were entitled to a free token per day.

Brewery representatives were serving the beer, so it was easy to ask questions from the people who worked there. Some of my favourite beers included gueuze from Girardin; Trappist beers from Achel, Orval, Rochefort and Westmalle; De Ranke Guldenberg and Kriek; Malheur no 10 and 12; and the wonderful Dupont 'Avec les bons Voeux' on draught. There were also a number of well-known English 'Belgian beer experts' at the festival, including Chris Pollard, co-writer of the excellent guide 'Around Bruges in 80 Beers'. They were all happy to chat about the 'find' of the festival or their current favourite.

The venue was the 14th century Belfry Tower in the centre of the town, and although it is a great location, it got incredibly crowded at times. This was a perfect excuse to leave the festival, and

visit the many superb bars in Bruges. These include 't Brugs Beertje, (possibly the best bar in the world), Garre, Vlissinghe, and Kelk. And the food, as always in Belgium, was French quality with German portions. Delicious!

November is a great time to visit the city, which is normally packed full of tourists in summer, as the wonderful medieval streets were virtually deserted outside the centre, and you can appreciate the architecture without the crowds.

Bruges is easy to get to by Eurostar, and we managed to get tickets for £29 each return. These tickets took us all the way to Bruges, as all Eurostar tickets to Belgium allow travel on from Brussels to ANY station in Belgium FREE on the day you arrive from the UK. This also applies on the return trip. And, as it was out of season, there were a huge number of B&Bs to choose from, with some excellent rates too.

All in all we had an excellent 3 days drinking beer, visiting bars, and eating wonderful food. We will definitely be going back this year, as it was a great way to liven up what is normally a dreary month!

This year's festival is on 14th and 15th November. Book now and get the best rates!

Marisa Francini 



LOCAL BREWERS OF YESTERYEAR

In recent years the opening of small micro breweries all over Britain has widened the choice of real ales available in pubs. Not so long ago, the then big brewers dominated the pub scene and the choice of beers available suffered as a result. Now that has all changed and there are more beers available with a wider choice of styles, than for many years.

Once there were breweries in most towns and villages, many of these were home brew pubs, but over the years these were swallowed up by the larger regional brewers and by the time CAMRA was formed there were less than half a dozen left.

In South Oxfordshire there were a number of brewers, at Henley, Goring and Wallingford, the beers provided by these breweries, were supplemented by those brewed by companies outside the area, who owned and operated pubs here. Names like Morrells and Morland are still to be seen on pubs, but their beers are no longer brewed in the original breweries. I live in Goring-on-Thames and the pubs here are now, with the exception

of one, all owned by pub owning companies; the exception is the Queens Arms, a Greene King house, whose beers are brewed in Bury St

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Edmunds. It was not always so, for this pub was owned by the Morrell family, who not only owned Streatley House, but operated a small laundry there in the High Street. This provided work



for the local population, the dirty laundry being brought from Morrell's brewery by train from Oxford to Goring & Streatley station, then taken by horse and cart across the river to the laundry in Streatley.

In Goring, however, there was a brewery in the High Street, owned by Gundry's, and that brewer owned most of the local pubs. In fact, according to the notice of sale in 1940, they owned 9 full licensed public houses, 16 Beerhouses and 4 licensed premises.

The site of the old brewery in the High Street is easily identified today, as some of the outbuildings have been converted for other use in recent times; there are now cottages at the junction with Cleeve Road, which now carry the name "Brewery Cottages"

Gundry's was an old established brewery and supplied most of the beers consumed in Goring and the surrounding area. The owner lived in "Thames House" a large building adjacent to the brewery. The brewery closed in 1939 and a public auction was held in Reading in 1940, to dispose of the brewery and public houses. Brakspear's of Henley acquired the local pubs, such as the Catherine Wheel and John Barleycorn. Gundry's not only brewed draught beers but did their own bottled beers. There are some fine examples of their unusual triangular labels to be seen in a frame at The Bell at Aldworth, including two different stouts, a good excuse for visiting this Good Beer Guide pub!

Roy Denison 

The Leathern Bottle



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Bottled Beer

These reviews look at some of the good bottled beers you can find in supermarkets or off-licences. Summer's just around the corner so our thoughts start to turn away from the darker, heavier brews of winter towards

Meantime London Pale Ale – 4.3% ABV

The Meantime brewery was founded in Greenwich ten years ago and has rapidly gained a reputation



for quality beer. A couple of issues ago we sampled their fine London Porter: this time it's the London Pale Ale (which for some reason isn't featured on their website). As soon as the bottle is opened there's an immediate hoppy aroma; in the glass the beer is an attractive dark gold with quite a big

frothy head. It's smooth and slightly sweet but with a distinct well-balanced bitterness and an aftertaste that endures. A very drinkable beer that's well worth trying.

www.meantimebrewing.com

Badger Hopping Hare – 4.5% ABV

Hopping Hare is a seasonal beer available in draft form from February to April, and in bottles at selected outlets. According to the label Super Styrian hops are added twice to the copper and the finished beer is then dry-hopped in the cask with Goldings. Not surprisingly the result is a light beer that is strong on hop aroma and bitterness. For me, the flavour fades rather



too quickly once

swallowed – it doesn't have the depth and lingering aftertaste of the London Pale Ale. Nevertheless, it's quite a nice beer that slides down easily.

www.hall-woodhouse.co.uk

Bath Ales Barnstormer – 4.5% ABV

Barnstormer is made from Bramling Cross hops with a mix of Maris Otter, Chocolate and Crystal malts. This makes for a dark special bitter, full-bodied and packed with plenty of flavour. It's the sort of ale that's good for routine home



consumption – one to swig when you get home from work to reward yourself for getting through another day.

www.bathales.com

Paul Dixon 



it takes all sorts to
campaign for real ale



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Beer Festivals

Summer is coming and with it, beer festivals.

Wallingford's popular **Blues and Beer Festival** takes place this year on Friday 5 and Saturday 6 June in the Regal Centre, Wallingford. Headline acts include The Animals and Sam Kelly's Primo Blue. Details www.bluesandbeer.co.uk

Saturday 13th June Candleford Fayre and Beer Festival. Fringford Cricket Ground, Fringford, nr Bicester. 20 beers plus cider & perry.

The **Red Lion in Brightwell**, our new *Pub of the Year*, is having its second **BrightFest** with beers, barbecue and live music on Saturday 13 June 12 - 12 and Sunday 14th 12 - 3 pm. Details www.redlion.biz **Continued page 22**





The Coach & Horses Inn

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The Coach & Horses Inn is a beautiful Good Beer Guide-listed country Pub & Restaurant at Chiselhampton, near Stadhampton in the stunning Oxfordshire countryside.

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www.coachhorsesinn.co.uk



Beer Festivals (cont.)

Sunday 14 June **Jack Howarth House**, Hill Top Road, Oxford. Charity event in aid of SCOPE.


Tuesday 16 to Saturday 20 June. Summer beer festival at the **Far From the Madding Crowd**, Oxford. Details www.maddingcrowd.co.uk

The **Home Sweet Home** Beer Festival will take place on Saturday and Sunday 27 and 28 June in Roke, near Benson.

Saturday 4 July 12th Charlbury Beer Festival. Charlbury Cricket Club, The Pavilion, Burford Road Charlbury. 36 beers plus ciders & perrys.

Saturday 4th July Haddenham Real Ale Festival. Youth & Community Centre, Woodaways, Haddenham.

South Oxfordshire CAMRA's own festival, the **Woodcote Festival of Ales**, takes place from 6 pm Friday 11 to 5.30 pm Sunday 13 July as part of the **Woodcote Rally** of steam, vintage & veteran transport. Over 20 Real Ales available, mainly local.

The **Bear at Home** is having a cricket and beer festival from Thursday 30 July to Sunday 2 August. With real ales, six-a-side cricket, live music, etc. Details www.bear-at-home.co.uk 

The Red Lion
Brightwell cum Sotwell
OX10 0RT

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Sue and Bob invite you to their gem of a village pub serving home cooked food using locally sourced ingredients where possible.

Four local beers always available, fabulous coffees and range of teas.

Monthly special cuisine nights, jazz nights and quiz nights.

See our web site for details: www.redlion.biz



**PUB OF
THE YEAR
2009**



The BEAR at HOME

North Moreton

**BEER
&
CRICKET
FESTIVAL**
THURS 30 JUL
TO
SUN 2 AUG



Come and enjoy a pint of local beer, and see if you agree with CAMRA members who voted us the best pub in Oxfordshire

Or you might like to sample our home cooked food.

Available Lunch & Evening 7 days a week.

Please book if you are eating.

**Darts, Boules, Shove Ha'penny
and Aunt Sally also available**

www.Bear-at-Home.co.uk

01235 811311



Chazey Heath, Maple Durham
Nr. Reading, Oxfordshire

The
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SADDLE**

*Where you can trust the words real, home made, fresh local produce.
Not a chain, an independent traditional pub, a drinkers bar
with Bar Billiards, Darts, Dominoes & Crib, 5 Real Ales
as well as a superb dining area.*

Friday Nights IPA £2.00, 6X £2.40

Wednesday Nights, Bowl + Pint £6.00

Bowl Typically a curry or chilli etc

Come home to real old-fashioned British cooking, all fresh and home-made.
A Real Pub with Real Food and a warm welcome, Coeliacs and other dietary requirements catered for.

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